

NOTICE TYPE: Pre-solicitation Notice

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AGENCY: International Cocoa Verification Board (ICVB)

OFFICE ADDRESS: International Cocoa Verification Board Secretariat
C/O Verité, Inc., 44 Belchertown Road, Amherst, MA, USA
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SUBJECT: Verification of Certification Activities in West African Cocoa Sector

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GEOGRAPHIC TARGET COUNTRIES: Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana

NOTICE TEXT:

The International Cocoa Verification Board (ICVB) is responsible to affirm through an independent "third party" verification process: 1) the credibility of the studies and findings reported by the governments of Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana on the worst forms of child labor (WFCL), including trafficking, and adult labor practices (ALP) in the cocoa sector; and 2) any remediation activities undertaken by the respective governments and their partners to address the elimination of the WFCL and adult forced labor from the cocoa sector as outlined in the National Surveys. The scope of this notice and forthcoming Request for Proposals (RFP) address the first objective listed above.

The results of the government studies are intended to provide information about the extent and nature of worst forms of child labor and adult labor practices in the cocoa production supply chain in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. The government studies have already been conducted and the reports can be found via the ICVB website at www.cocoaverification.net.

The ICVB seeks the establishment of a quality, evidence-based verification process, including a timeline of activities, which is of the highest ethical standards in the field of social research. The findings from the verification process will be used to strengthen certification efforts and, in the future, will be used to strengthen remediation activities. Therefore, the ICVB expects

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the verification of findings to be conducted in a manner that is transparent and sustainable.

In order to accomplish these objectives, the ICVB plans to acquire consultative services for a “third party” independent verification of the government studies, their findings, and on-going remediation activities as outlined in the National Surveys. The consultative services to be performed will:

1. Document and examine the methodology used for the studies by the respective government agencies in Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana and ascertain the validity and reliability of the findings reported in the studies. This review will include, but will not be limited to:
 - a. Determining if clearly defined research objectives and anticipated outcomes (focusing on child labor practices) guided the development of instruments for data collection.
 - b. Examining the appropriateness and effectiveness of the research technique(s) used (face-to-face interviews, self-administered surveys, focus group discussions, telephone interviews, child-centered interview methods, participatory interview methods, or a combination of one or more of these), and the basis for selection of the technique(s).
 - c. Assessing the validity and reliability of the instruments (questionnaires, interview guides, focus group discussions and/or other group or individuals interview guides) used for the studies, with particular attention to the language of instrument, issues of translation of the questionnaire into local languages, and ability to effectively collect accurate responses from target respondents (such as children, trafficking victims, and children and adults in forced labor).
 - d. Assessing the techniques used for selecting the sample(s) for each country study [controlling for sampling procedure (census, eligibility, etc.), identification of target respondents for the studies, sampling design and procedure, sample size, sample geographic areas, etc.].
 - e. Assessing the data collection procedures used (recruitment of fieldworkers, training of field staff, and trial field testing of instruments),
 - f. Assessing the fieldwork exercise (including duration, seasons in which data was collected, and monitoring of data collection process) and establishing quality control mechanisms, including follow-up procedures, to ensure verifiable data results.

- g. Assessing the effectiveness of data handling; data entry / processing and cleaning of data for accuracy; meeting internationally recognized standards; and establishing an efficient data entry and analysis process.
 - h. Assessing the data analysis processes and determine if:
 - i. results, conclusions, and recommendations are in line with the objectives of the studies;
 - ii. data analysis and results are accurately presented in a manner that provides the most useful information possible (i.e., testing alternative tabulations and factor/regression models); and
 - iii. data management system design offers an evidence-based and user-friendly data management system where results can be presented and easily analyzed (i.e., using SPSS or similar program).
2. The results of the “third party” verification process will be compiled into individual reports for each country. Each report will present the findings that include, but are not limited to:
- a. The content of the study reports to answer the following questions related to items identified above:
 - i. Is the methodology used sound and reliable?
 - ii. Is the full range of objectives for the studies met?
 - iii. Are the findings accurate, valid, and reliable?
 - iv. Do the conclusions flow from the results?
 - v. Do the recommendations reflect the findings and objectives of the studies?
 - b. Present findings related to gaps, errors, omissions, inaccuracies, and serious shortfalls in the procedures of the studies’ methodology, findings, conclusions, and recommendations.
 - c. Make recommendations for acceptance or rejection of the report(s), with detailed explanation and documentation as follows:
 - i. Accept: Without modification.
 - ii. Conditional Acceptance: Acceptance conditional on modifications specified in the verification report.
 - iii. Conditional Rejection: Recommendation for improvements of the research process for future studies.
 - iv. Reject: Rejection of part or whole of the report, findings, conclusions, or recommendations, as may be required.
 - d. Additional remarks and comments that are appropriate for advancing the verification process.

The report will be made public and widely distributed. The report will serve to inform the international community on the progress of efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor and adult forced labor in the cocoa sector in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana.

This Pre-solicitation Notice is not a request for competitive proposals. The full Request for Proposals (RFP) is scheduled for release on or about February 18, 2008.

The ICVB invites all interested parties that meet the full criteria outlined in the forthcoming RFP to submit a proposal through this open and competitive process. Interested parties, including not-for-profit organizations, universities and other research entities, non-governmental organizations, for-profit development and research agencies, and other private sector entities, are encouraged to apply.

One or more contracts will be awarded in conjunction with the Terms of Reference outlined in the full RFP. It is strongly encouraged that, whenever possible, interested parties work with local partners in one or both of the targeted countries of Côte d'Ivoire and/or Ghana or be locally-based. The technical skills and capabilities sought include, but are not limited to: (1) prior experience and knowledge of similar or related verification processes; (2) research technical knowledge and experience in social research, specifically surrounding marginalized populations such as those at risk or engaged in WFCL and adult forced labor; (3) field work capacity; (4) experience in the cocoa sector or other similar agricultural sector; and (5) being of irreproachable ethical quality and independence.

The ICVB anticipates that the resulting contract(s) will be cost-reimbursement in nature and will be awarded to one or more qualified consultants based on the proposed Terms of References outlined in the full RFP. Preference will be given to a "general contractor model" working with various entities on the ground in the targeted geographic areas. However, this preference does not preclude using one general contractor to conduct verifying activities in each respective country or from local entities responding to the RFP.

The ICVB anticipates the initial period of performance to consist of a base period (not to exceed six months) from April to September 2008, and two possible option years (if exercised by the ICVB and dependent upon successful quality performance). Subsequent periods of performance may extend beyond a six-month period.

The ICVB anticipates release of the full RFP on or about February 18, 2008 with a closing date of March 17, 2008.

Additional background information on the ICVB and copies of the Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana studies are provided for your review and can soon be found via the ICVB website at www.cocoaverification.net (or upon request via email to Alexa Roscoe, aroscoe@verite.org).

With the exception of written questions pertaining to this notice, the ICVB will not accept written correspondence, literature, or other proposal-type submissions. Questions regarding this notice should be forwarded to the ICVB Secretariat office contact listed above. Please ensure that the name of the agency/company, a point of contact, viable e-mail address, and telephone number are clearly indicated on your submission. Responses to questions will be posted to the following website: <http://www.cocoaverification.net>.

INTERNET ADDRESS: www.cocoaverification.net